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Waiting on the Bounty: the Dust Bowl Diary of Mary Knackstedt Dyck

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and the accompanying bureaucratic warfare between the Children's Bureau and the Public Health Service—is missing. The subject is worthy of another chapter, and one wishes that Clements had chosen to research and write one.

Any weaknesses, however, are far outweighed by the book's strengths. It is a work, moreover, that students of Iowa history will want to add to their reading list, both because of the new knowledge and understanding it provides of Herbert Hoover and because of the way it alters the national context within which Iowa's state conservation programs were taking shape.

Waiting on the Bounty: The Dust Bowl Diary of Mary Knackstedt Dyck, edited by Pamela Riney-Kehrberg. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999. xiv, 365 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, appendix, index. \$37.95 cloth.

Reviewer Barbara Handy-Marchello is associate professor of history at the University of North Dakota. She has written articles on farm women on the northern plains and is preparing a book titled "'Carrying Half': Gender and Settlement in Rural North Dakota."

Pamela Riney-Kehrberg is absolutely correct when she states in her preface to Mary Knackstedt Dyck's diary that this is an exceptional document of rural life in the Dust Bowl. Diaries of farm women of any era are rare enough, but this one gives readers an inside look at a national environmental disaster during a period of national economic depression. Dyck's personal perspective on these events rarely reaches beyond her family and immediate surroundings, but readers with an interest in this time period and location will find her diary informative.

This document covers the years 1936 to 1941. Dyck and her husband, Henry, farmed in Hamilton County, Kansas, in the heart of the Dust Bowl. Dyck's diary is part account book, part family record, and part record of her personal feelings and thoughts. It appeals for two contrasting reasons. The ordinariness of their lives and work draws readers into the family. Milking cows, separating cream, churning, gathering eggs, preparing meals, washing clothes, and cleaning house were the daily events that structured the Dycks' lives. Visits with family and neighbors, trips to town, and Henry's "tomcatting" in Colorado (where he could buy liquor) constituted most of their social activities. Mary had fewer occasions to leave the farm, but sometimes joined other women to quilt or went with Henry to the community hall dance.

The dust storms were interlaced with farm life. The length, the degree of darkness, and the intensity of the wind distinguished one storm

from another. Static electricity generated by the storms interrupted their radio reception, which distressed both, but especially Mary, who was deeply involved in the lives of characters in her favorite serials. But it is the near daily-ness of the dust storms that is so astounding. The fence rows filled with dirt Henry had to dig out. The car and tractor stalled because of the static electricity. They had to give up on fieldwork when the dust blew too hard. As soon as the storms ended, Mary cleaned dust from the floors, furniture, closets, basement, out-houses, windows, and clothes. The work required simply to manage the dirt was added to the work of managing a farm and home. No wonder Mary rejoiced when three or four days passed without a dust storm.

The other appealing aspect of the diary is the extraordinariness of this poorly educated yet literary woman. She plainly reveals intimate details of their lives within the account of work and social events. She wrote about her fears, her quarrels with Henry, and her fondness for him. While possessing a healthy sense of humor, she was often deeply depressed. She endured problems with her ears, migraine headaches, and pain due to dental problems and overwork. And yet she was rarely discouraged. It seems to be the ordinariness of life that sustained her through the hardships of the Dust Bowl and her personal problems.

Riney-Kehrberg's introduction adequately provides the historical context for the diaries. She wisely limits her tampering with spelling and punctuation to only the most necessary explanatory remarks. Yet she misses opportunities for a more intensive analysis of Dyck's life. Readers will be tempted to try to understand whether the dust storms might have triggered Dyck's depression, how the couple managed to pay their bills with so little income, and whether she enjoyed the authority over the household that women expect. Dyck tells us so much, but there is still too much we don't know.

The diary ends with the accident that took the life of the Dycks' only son. Riney-Kehrberg fills in the outline of the Dycks' lives following the son's death, but readers may want to hear more from Mary Dyck because we have come to care about her.

Race, Jobs, and the War: The FEPC in the Midwest, 1941-46, by Andrew Edmund Kersten. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000. x, 210 pp. Illustrations notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Reviewer Eric Arnesen is professor of history and African-American studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is the author of *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (2001) and *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (1994).

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